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THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY

CELEBRATE HALLOWEEN--
WITH 7
SUSPENSE-FILLED
SHOCKERS!

J-4132



“Satan’s Child”

Originally Published: “House of Mystery” Vol. 28, issue 256, DC Comics, Jan/Feb 1976

Script By: Jack Oleck

Art By: Arthur Suydam

Color By: Liz Berube

Editor: Paul Levitz

Cover Art to ‘House of Mystery’ #256: Bernie Wrightson

Greater Comics Database Link: <http://www.comics.org/issue/31836/>

Submitted by: E.M. Tonner

Preface



Jack Oleck
© Joe Simon

Frankly... it pisses me off.

Jack Oleck is a goddamned LEGEND in the comic book industry that no one’s ever heard of. The brother-in-law of Joe Simon, Oleck began scripting comics just after World War 2 (where he was a sergeant). The earliest credit I’ve been able to locate for Oleck is his scripting of ‘Fraulein Sweetheart’ from 1948’s ‘Young Romance’ #4.

Oleck also scripted for E.C. comics in the 50’s, wrote two historical novels (‘Messalina’ and ‘Theodora’) and countless DC comics through the 70’s and 80’s. I’ve found 66 writing credits for ‘House of Mystery’, 38 writing credits for ‘House of Secrets’ and 55 script credits for ‘Weird War Tales’. Those are just three series. Has Oleck scripted over one thousand comics? Probably.

Before ‘Marvel Zombies’ and ‘Deadpool’ there was Arthur Suydam. Even at the tender age of 8, I knew this guy was an amazing artist. His style at the time seemed perfectly matched for the backwoods bayou setting of ‘Satan’s Child’. More on him later. For now, enjoy!

Warning:

The following content contains violence and graphic content.

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A CALLOUS, SADISTIC BRUTE LIKE BURNS DIDN'T DESERVE TO HAVE A SON. SO WHEN HE FINALLY HAD ONE IT WAS NO MORE THAN POETIC JUSTICE THAT, IN A STRANGE, BIZARRE SORT OF WAY, IT SHOULD TURN OUT TO BE NOT HIS, BUT ...

SATAN'S CHILD

SCRIPT: JACK OLECK
ART: ARTHUR SLYDAM
COLOR: LIZ BERUBE
EDITOR: PAUL LEVITZ

WELL, OLD WITCH? I WANT A **SON**! WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO HAVE ONE?

PERHAPS--MORE THAN YOU CAN **IMAGINE**, FOOL! I CAN GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANT!

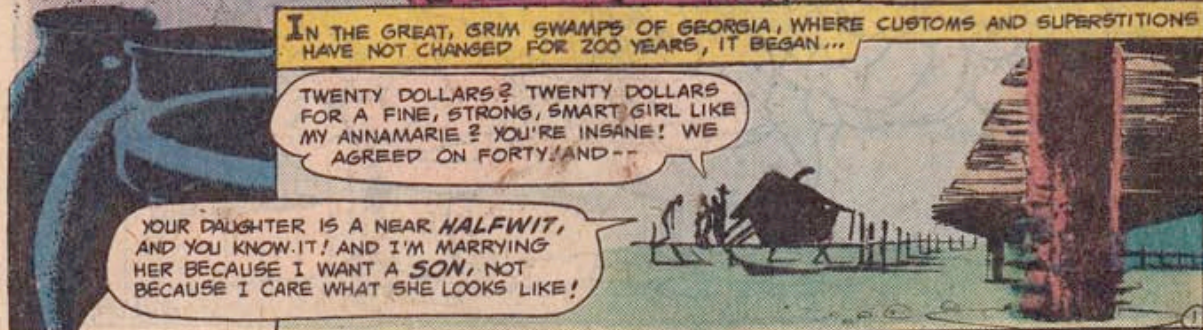
BUT WHEN YOU BARGAIN WITH SATAN, **SATAN** DECIDES WHAT YOU MUST PAY!



IN THE GREAT, GRIM SWAMPS OF GEORGIA, WHERE CUSTOMS AND SUPERSTITIONS HAVE NOT CHANGED FOR 200 YEARS, IT BEGAN ...

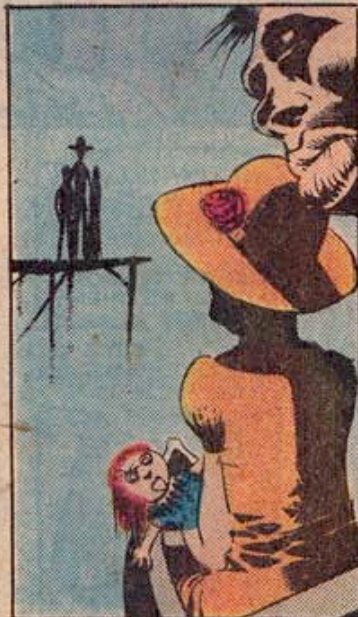
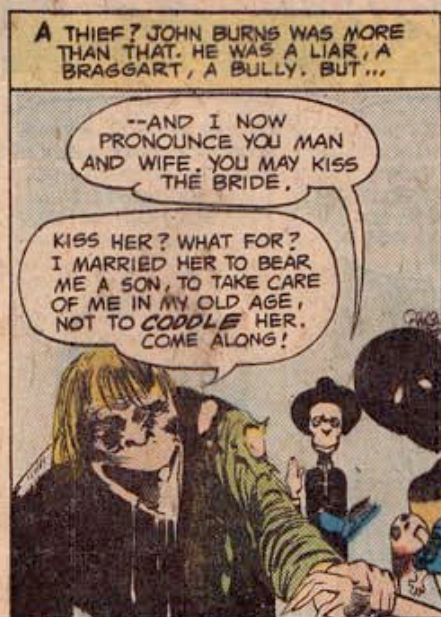
TWENTY DOLLARS? TWENTY DOLLARS FOR A FINE, STRONG, SMART GIRL LIKE MY ANNAMARIE? YOU'RE INSANE! WE AGREED ON FORTY! AND--

YOUR DAUGHTER IS A NEAR **HALFWIT**, AND YOU KNOW IT! AND I'M MARRYING HER BECAUSE I WANT A **SON**, NOT BECAUSE I CARE WHAT SHE LOOKS LIKE!





A THIEF? JOHN BURNS WAS MORE THAN THAT. HE WAS A LIAR, A BRAGGART, A BULLY. BUT...



EVEN THEN, SIMPLE AS SHE WAS, ANNAMARIE BURNS MUST HAVE KNOWN WHAT HER LIFE WAS TO BE LIKE FROM THAT DAY ON...



AND SO IT BEGAN. FOR ANNAMARIE, THAT MOMENT MARKED HER DESCENT INTO A LIVING HELL. BUT FOR BURNS...



FOR MONTHS, HE WAS ALMOST CONTENT.
BUT THAT WAS NOT TO LAST...

WHY, CURSE YOU? IT'S
BEEN A WHOLE YEAR!
OTHER WOMEN HAVE
BABIES! AND ALL YOU
CAN DO IS PLAY WITH
THAT STUPID **DOLL**!
WHY?

I-- JOHN, PLEASE!
I-I **WANT** TO GIVE
YOU A SON! BUT IT--
IT JUST DOESN'T
HAPPEN. IT--

IT DOESN'T HAPPEN BECAUSE
YOU'RE A USELESS **IMITATION**
OF A WOMAN, NOT A REAL ONE!
BUT I'M NOT BEATEN YET!

THERE ARE WAYS TO MAKE THINGS
HAPPEN! AND IF I HAVE TO, I'LL
USE 'EM!

ONE DAY I'LL BE
OLD! I WON'T BE
ABLE TO HUNT OR
FISH ANYMORE!

AND WHO'LL LOOK
OUT FOR ME THEN?
YOU? NO!

BUT I KNOW
A WAY TO MAKE YOU
GIVE ME WHAT I
WANT!

IN ANY OTHER
PLACE, WHAT
BURNS DID THEN
WOULD NOT HAVE
BEEN POSSIBLE.
BUT IN THESE
SWAMPS...

A SON? BUT
HOW CAN I HELP
YOU TO HAVE A
SON? YOU'RE
MAD!

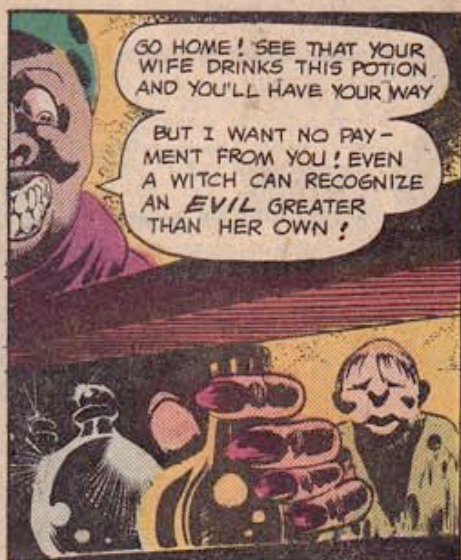
MAD, AM I, OLD
HAG? DO YOU
THINK I DON'T
KNOW THAT YOU'RE
A **WITCH**? SO
YOU'LL DO AS
I SAY!

REFUSE, AND I'LL WRING
YOUR SCRAWNY NECK!
CALL ON THE DEVIL! DO
WHAT YOU MUST! I'LL
PAY! BUT HELP ME! OR--

ALL-ALL RIGHT! YOU'RE A
FOOL, JOHN BURNS! ONLY
FOOLS CALL ON THE DEVIL!
BUT IF IT'S A SON YOU WANT,
A SON YOU SHALL HAVE!

GO HOME! SEE THAT YOUR
WIFE DRINKS THIS POTION
AND YOU'LL HAVE YOUR WAY

BUT I WANT NO PAY-
MENT FROM YOU! EVEN
A **WITCH** CAN RECOGNIZE
AN **EVIL** GREATER
THAN HER OWN!



HOW BURNS CHUCKLED AT THAT! WHAT DID HE CARE ABOUT EVIL? HE KNEW ONLY THAT SOON HE WOULD HAVE HIS HEART'S DESIRE...

JOHN, NO! PLEASE DON'T MAKE ME--OH!

DRINK IT, BLAST YOU! I'LL HAVE MY SON EVEN IF IT MEANS YOUR LIFE!

A HULKING BRUTE--AGAINST A SLIP OF A GIRL. FOR ANNAMARIE, THERE WAS NO CHOICE, REALLY...

Y-YES, JOHN.

THE POTION WAS VILE, NAUSEATING. AND YET, AFTERWARD, ILL AND TREMBLING THOUGH SHE WAS, THERE WAS NO REST FOR ANNAMARIE...

HER TORMENT WENT ON UNTIL...

A BABY? YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO HAVE A BABY? AT LAST! BUT I DIDN'T KNOW--WHEN WILL IT HAPPEN? WHEN--

SOON! I-I HAD IT FROM YOU. I-I DIDN'T WANT TO TELL YOU UNTIL I WAS CERTAIN, BUT NOW--I KNOW!

I-I THINK YOU'D BETTER GET MY MOTHER! I THINK--IT'S TIME--

DO YOU THINK I'D TRUST THAT IGNORANT OLD WOMAN TO BRING MY SON INTO THE WORLD? NO!

THERE'S A CHARITY CLINIC IN TOWN! WE CAN BE THERE IN A FEW HOURS! I'M TAKING NO CHANCES! COME ON!





ONLY JOHN BURNS SAW, AFTERWARD. BUT EVEN THEN, THERE WAS NO TENDERNESS IN HIM.

H-HOW DID YOU GET HERE? WHAT'S HAPPENED?

I'VE BROUGHT YOU OUR BABY, JOHN. OUR SON. NOW, MAYBE WE CAN BE *HAPPY*. NOW MAYBE YOU CAN EVEN LEARN TO *CARE* A LITTLE ABOUT ME--



CARE--ABOUT YOU? I CAN'T STAND THE SIGHT OF YOU, YOU SNIVELLING NOTHING!

BUT AT LEAST NOW I HAVE A SON! SOMEONE TO MAKE MY LIFE EASIER--



SOMEONE TO--NO! YOU MONSTER! YOU DON'T WANT A SON! YOU WANT A *SLAVE*! SOMEONE TO TORTURE, THE WAY YOU'VE TORTURED ME!



BUT YOU WON'T RUIN MY 'BABY'S' LIFE THE WAY YOU'VE RUINED MINE! I WON'T LET YOU!

YOU CAN'T HAVE HIM! YOU'LL NEVER HAVE HIM!

ANNAMARIE! COME BACK HERE! I WARN YOU! COME BACK HERE OR--



WHAM!

TRY TO STEAL MY SON, WILL YOU? I'LL TEACH YOU TO BAD-MOUTH ME! I--

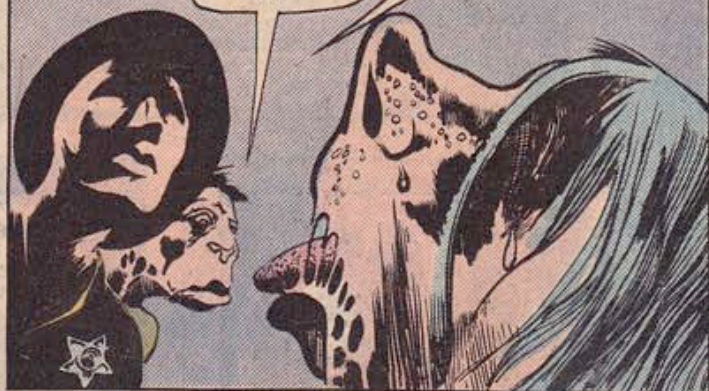


BURNS!

THE CLINIC CALLED ME WHEN THEY FOUND ANNAMARIE MISSING! I FIGURED SHE'D COME HERE, BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT *THIS*! YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!

SHERIFF! WHERE DID YOU COME FROM? I-I JUST WANTED TO SEE MY SON! AND SHE TRIED TO RUN OFF WITH HIM! BUT SHE'S ALL RIGHT--

ALL RIGHT? SHE'S GONE, BURNS! AND IN MY BOOK, IT WAS MURDER!



ARREST? BUT--NO! YOU FOOL! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! ALL I WANTED WAS MY SON! I JUST--



YOUR SON, EH? AND YOU CALL ME A FOOL? IF YOU'D HAD THE DECENCY TO STAY AT THE CLINIC, YOU'D KNOW! YOUR SON WAS BORN DEAD!



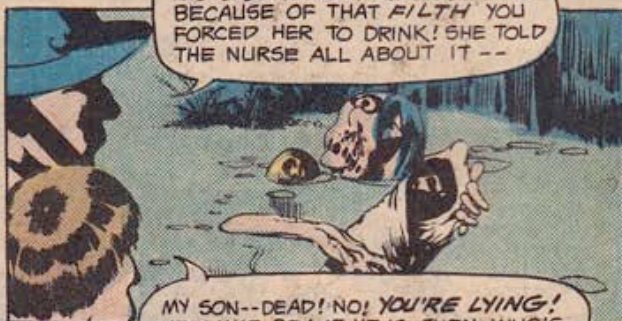
DEAD? DEAD? BUT HOW WHY--

WHO INDEED? BURNS SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GUESS THE ANSWER TO THAT. IT WAS TOO BAD THAT HE WASN'T A RELIGIOUS MAN.



BECAUSE IF HE HAD BEEN, HE MIGHT HAVE REMEMBERED A CERTAIN LINE FROM THE BIBLE...

WHY? MAYBE BECAUSE OF ALL THOSE BEATINGS, BURNS! MAYBE BECAUSE OF THAT FILTH YOU FORCED HER TO DRINK! SHE TOLD THE NURSE ALL ABOUT IT--



MY SON--DEAD! NO! YOU'RE LYING! HE CAN'T BE! IF HE IS, THEN WHO'S THAT IN HER ARMS?

THIS? DON'T YOU KNOW, BURNS? SHE WANTED TO MAKE YOU HAPPY, SO SHE BROUGHT YOU HER MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION-- HER BABY.



OR AT LEAST WHAT SHE THOUGHT WAS HER BABY. TAKE A LOOK, BURNS. TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT WHAT YOU KILLED FOR!

END

Afterword



It just wouldn't be right *not* to have an Oleck story in 'Best Horror Comics Ever'. You may disagree. I don't care. There are 100 other stories by Oleck illustrated by other amazing artists (Wood, Nino, Adams, Alcalá etc.) that *could* have been submitted, but I chose this one. Is it *really* scary? Nope. But it was harder hitting than most of the stuff in DC comics from 1976.

What is striking is the *art*. Sudyam is different from anything else out there, even more abstract than Alex Nino. His panel layout (in this story) was simple. The usual 5 to 7 panels per page, one overlapping panel and a few borderless ones, but nothing revolutionary. No, it was Sudyam's style of grotesque that really brought it home. His inking is superb as well.

I encourage everyone to check out Sudyam's other early works, especially "Christmas Carol", originally published in the December 1979 'Heavy Metal' magazine. It certainly deserves a nod too.

*"Ordinary professionalism and 20 years' experience can accomplish a lot,
but it can't access the hidden places."*

- Jeanette Winterson

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